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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

14 March 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: "PUSHTUNISTAN"¹

1. The "Pashtunistan" quarrel between Pakistan and Afghanistan has smoldered ever since 1947.² This unlikely-sounding issue merits renewed attention at the moment for two reasons: (1) We believe that tensions have reached a point where there is about an even chance of substantial disturbances along the Pakistani-Afghan border in the current year, and (2) If a new flareup occurs, the US will probably be more directly involved than in the past.

1/ This memorandum has been discussed with OGI and EOP.

2/ The quarrel centers on Afghanistan's insistence that the six million Pushtuns (Pathans) who live in Pakistan's North-West Frontier area, and who are of the same tribal group as the dominant element in Afghanistan, are being oppressed by Pakistan and should be given an opportunity to opt for an independent state of "Pashtunistan."

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Prospects for a Clash

2. There has been sporadic small scale fighting in the border areas over the past dozen years. This has been principally by tribes, incited and supported by Afghanistan, against Pakistani efforts to extend central government control over the tribal areas. Tension has grown rapidly during the last six months. Last fall a force of Afghan irregulars which entered Pakistan in support of dissident tribesmen was badly mauled by the Pakistanis, who took advantage of the disturbance to occupy the remote border area involved. Within the past month Afghan-supported tribal elements in an adjacent area of Pakistan have been bombed and strafed by the Pakistan Air Force.

3. There are clear indications that the Afghans plan to continue their agitation. Foreign Minister Naim (usually a moderate on the "Pushtunistan" issue) and his militant brother, Prime Minister Daud, have both made statements to this effect. Afghan "volunteers" are apparently being recruited for action in the tribal area; tribal clothing is being manufactured for the volunteers by the Afghan government; and 10,000 old British rifles and large quantities of ammunition have reportedly been sent to the border area. Recently two brigades of the Afghan regular army have been moved into a supporting position.

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4. Pakistani leaders, including President Ayub, have made no secret of their intention to hit back hard if the Afghans incite further trouble in the tribal area. Some of them have talked about occupying territory across the international boundary in Afghanistan in order to surround the border hills wherein the tribal areas are centered. We think it unlikely that they will do so. If they do, however, the US and the USSR are likely to become involved, at least to the extent of having to take positions. We know relatively little of specific Pakistani plans and preparations in the tribal area, but it is clear that a general strengthening and pushing forward of the government position into the hitherto isolated tribal territory is a major policy of the Ayub government.

International Implications

5. During the years that the "Pashtunistan" quarrel has dragged on, the US has expanded its relations with Pakistan while the USSR has come to have increasingly close ties with Afghanistan. Both the great powers have provided arms for the respective sides. The USSR has openly supported the Afghan position on "Pashtunistan." The US, on the other hand, has carefully avoided taking sides on the issue, but has during the past few years developed certain important installations

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in the area of Pakistan inhabited by the Pushtuns. These installations (at least one of which could be exposed to tribal attack) have been scored by Radio Kabul as "rocket bases." They have also been denounced by the USSR.

6. Additionally, the Afghans have condemned Pakistan's use of arms received under the US military assistance program against the dissident tribesmen. The recent bombing attacks were carried out by F 86 Fs. The Pakistanis can argue legitimately that they have a perfect right to use the MDAP weapons to maintain internal security or to repel aggression. The legal question would be less clear if they were to use the weapons in a countermove which violated the international boundary. However, Karachi, in its present mood, would be unlikely to be deterred by legal niceties. Afghan tactics are to inspire tribal warfare within Pakistan; Kabul will be reluctant to commit its Soviet supplied aircraft and tanks, but would almost certainly do so in the event of a Pakistani raid into Afghanistan.

7. The US, through its ambassadors in Kabul and Karachi, has urged moderation on both sides, but there is little reason to believe that this will have much effect. Nor is any other way of preventing a clash immediately apparent. Afghanistan

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has long wanted to get the "Pushtunistan" issue into the UN, and would probably seize on any likely opportunity to try to do so. Should the issue go to the UN, the American installations in the Pushtun area and Pakistani use of US-supplied arms against the Pushtuns would almost certainly come under attack by the USSR and portions at least of the neutralist camp. Even more important, the US would find itself under heavy pressure to support its ally Pakistan at the cost of further alienation of the Afghans.

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SHERMAN KENT
Chairman

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